

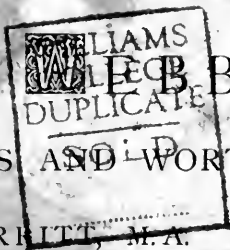
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ONAS



HIS LIFE, LABOURS AND WORTH.

BY ELIHU BURRITT, M.A.



LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, SON, AND MARSTON,

CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.

1868.




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JONAS WEBB,
HIS LIFE, LABOURS AND WORTH.

BY ELIHU BURRITT, M.A.

REPRINTED FROM "A WALK FROM LONDON TO
JOHN O'GROATS."



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1868.

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PREFACE.



THE Author of the following notice of the Life and Labours of the late Jonas Webb is very desirous that it shall reach a larger number of the friends and acquaintances of that most worthy and useful man than it can through the book from which it has been copied. There are thousands in Great Britain, its Colonies, and the United States, who knew and highly esteemed Jonas Webb for his almost unparal-

leled service to the agricultural interests of his country and the world. Many of them may like to have and preserve some condensed account of his life and labours, to which the farmers of different countries are so much indebted. Some of them may also wish to know a little more of his character as a Christian citizen, father, husband, neighbour and friend, than they can learn from those detached notices of his professional or occupational life which appeared in agricultural newspapers at his death; and which probably have never been collated and published in a book or pamphlet form. The author of this little tribute to his worth and memory hopes, therefore, that it may get into the hands of many in Great Britain, America, and Australia, who will never see the "Walk

from London to John O'Groats," from which it is taken.

In order to give the reader a more vivid idea of the personal appearance of Mr. Webb than any verbal description could convey, a portrait has been engraved, from the last photographic likeness taken of him, expressly for this little book. All who ever saw him will recognise in it those features which so expressed his character, and inspired so much respect and even veneration for it.

One motive for bringing out this notice in the present form, is to enable his friends and acquaintance in Great Britain to send it by post if they wish, at small expense, to agriculturists or others who knew and esteemed his reputation, in countries beyond the sea. To all at home or abroad, whom it may

reach, the author respectfully dedicates this small homage of esteem to a remembrance which any nation or age might well preserve and cherish in the treasury of its richest memories.

Birmingham, May 1, 1868.





JONAS WEBB,

HIS LIFE, LABOURS, AND WORTH.



HIS is Babraham; and here lived Jonas Webb; a good man and true, whose influence and usefulness had a broader circumference than the widest empire in the world. A Frenchman has written the fullest history of both, and an American here offers reverentially a tribute to his worth. The light of his life was a soft and gentle illumination on its earth-side; the lustre of the other was revealed only by partial glimpses to those who leaned closest to him in the testing-moments of his higher nature. He was one of the great bene-

factors, whose lives and labours become the common inheritance of mankind, and whose names go down through long generations with a pleasant memory. To a certain extent, he was to the great primeval industry of the world, what Arkwright, Watts, Stephenson, Fulton, and Morse were each to the mechanical and scientific activities of the age. He did as much, perhaps, as any man that ever preceded him, to honour that industry, and lift it up to the level of the first occupations of modern times, which had claimed higher qualities of intelligence, genius and enterprise. He was a farmer, and his ancestors had been farmers from time immemorial. He did not bound into the occupation as an enthusiastic amateur, who had acquired a large fortune by manufacturing or commercial enterprise, which he was eager to lavish upon bold and uncertain experiments. He attained his highest eminence by the careful gradations of a continuous experience, reaching back far into the labours of his ancestors. The science, skill and judgment he brought to bear upon his

operations, came from his reading, thinking, observations and experiments as a practical and hereditary farmer. The capital he employed in expanding these operations to their culminating magnitude, he acquired by farming. The mental culture, the generous dispositions, the refined manners, the graceful and manly bearing which made him one of the first gentlemen of the age, he acquired as a farmer. The mansion which welcomed to its easy and large-hearted hospitalities guests of such distinction from his own and other countries, was a farmer's home, and few ever opened their doors to more urbanity and cordial cheer. This is an aspect of his character which all those who follow the profession he honoured should admire with a laudable *esprit de corps*.

As a back-ground is an important element in the portraiture of human forms or natural scenery, so the ground on which the life and labours of Jonas Webb should be sketched, merits a few preliminary lines. Of all the occupations that employ and sustain the toiling myriads of our race, agriculture

leans closest to the bosom of Divine Providence. It is an industry bound to the great and beautiful economies of the creation by more visible and sensible ties than any other worked by human hands. We will not here diverge to dwell upon these high and interesting affiliations. In their place we will give them a little extended thought. There is one feature of agricultural enterprise, however, that should not be overlooked in this connection. All its operations are above-board and open to the wide world, just like the fields to which they are applied. Nothing here is under lock and key. Nothing bears the grim warning over the bolted door, "No admittance here except on business!"—meaning by business, exclusively and sharply, the buying of certain wares of the establishment at a good round profit to the manufacturer, without carrying away a single scintillation or suggestion of his skill. If he has invented or adopted machinery or a process of labour which enables him to turn out cheap muslin at three farthings' less cost per yard than his neighbours

can make it, he seals up the secret from them with the keenest vigilance. Not so in the great and heaven-honoured industry of agriculture. Its experiments and improvements upon the earth's face are all put into the common stock of human knowledge and happiness. They can no more be placed under lock and key, as selfish secrets, than the stars themselves that look down upon them with all their golden eyes. No new implement of husbandry, no new mechanical force or chemical principle, no new process of labour or line of economy is withheld from the great commonwealth of mankind. As the broad skies above, as the sun and moon, and stars, as the winds, the rains, the dews, the birds and bees of heaven over-ride and ignore, in their missions, the boundaries of jealous nations, so all the great activities of agriculture prove their lineage by following the same generous rule. They are bounded by no nationalities. They are shut up in no narrow enclosure of self, but are put out as new vesicles of light to brighten the general illumination of the world.

The department in which Jonas Webb attained to his position and capacity of usefulness was peculiarly marked by this characteristic. In a certain sense, it occupied a higher range of interest than that section of agriculture which is connected solely with the growing of grain, grass, and other crops. His great and distinguishing husbandry was the cultivation of animal life. To make two spires of grass grow where only one grew before has been pronounced as a great benefaction; and greater still are the merit and the gain of making one grow where nothing grew before. To go into the midst of Dartmoor, and turn an acre of its cold, stony, water-soaked waste into a fruitful field of golden grain, is going into co-partnership with Providence in the work of creation to a very large and honoured degree. But to put the skilful hand of science upon creatures of flesh and blood, to re-form their physical structures and shapes, to add new inches to their stature, straighten their backs, expand their reins, amplify their chests, reduce all the lines and curves of their

forms to an unborn symmetry, and then to give silky softness and texture to their aboriginal clothing—this seems to be mounting one step higher in the attainment and dignity of creative faculties. And this pre-eminently was the department in which Jonas Webb acquired a distinction perhaps unparalleled to the present time. This has made his name familiar all over Christendom, and honoured among the world's benefactors. Never, before him, did a farmstead become such a centre and have such a wide-sweeping radius as his. None ever possessed such centripetal attractions, or exerted such centrifugal influences for the material well-being of different and distant countries. Indeed, those most remote are most specially indebted to his large and generous operations. America and Australia will ever owe his memory an everlasting homage.

His operations filled and crowned two great departments of improvement seldom, if ever, carried on simultaneously and evenly to a great success by one man. His first distinguishing spe-

ciality was sheep culture. When he had brought this to the highest standard of perfection ever attained, he devoted the surplus capital of skill, experience and pecuniary means he had acquired from the process to the breeding of cattle; and he became nearly as eminent in this field of improvement as in the other. A few facts may serve as an outline of his progress in both to the American reader who is familiar with the general result of his efforts.

Jonas Webb was born at Great Thurlow, Suffolk, on the 10th of November, 1796. His father, who died at the age of ninety-three, was a veteran in agriculture, and had attained to honourable distinction by his efforts to improve the old Norfolk breed of sheep, and by his experiments with other races. The results obtained from these operations convinced his son that more mutton and better wool could be made per acre from the Southdown than from any other breed, upon nine-tenths of the arable land of England, where the sheep are regularly folded, especially where the land is poor.

In 1822, he commenced that agricultural career which won for him such a world-wide celebrity, by taking the Babraham Farm, occupying about 1000 acres, some twelve miles south of Cambridge. In a very interesting letter, addressed to the "Farmers' Magazine," about twenty years since, he gives a valuable *résumé* of his experience up to that time. In this he states several facts that may be especially useful to American agriculturists. Having decided in his own mind that the Southdowns were preferable to every other breed, for the two properties mentioned, he went into Sussex, their native county, and purchased the best rams and ewes that could be obtained of the principal breeders, regardless of expense, and never made a cross from any other breed afterwards. Nor was this all; he never introduced new blood into his stock from flocks of the same breed, but, by a virtually in-and-in process, he was able to produce qualities till then unknown to the race, and to make them permanent and distinctive properties. Now this achievement in itself has an interest

beyond its utilitarian value to the agricultural world. To

“ Rejoice in the joy of well-created things ”

is one of the best privileges and pleasures of a well-constituted mind. But what higher honour can attach to human science or industry than that of taking such a visible and effective part in that creation?—in sending out into the world successive generations of animal life, bearing each, through future ages and distant countries, the shaping impress of human fingers, long since gone back to their dust; features, forms, lines, curves, qualities and characteristics which those fingers, working, as it were, on the right wrist of Divine Providence, gave to the sheep and cattle upon a thousand hills in both hemispheres? There are flocks and herds now grazing upon the boundless prairies of America, the vast plains of Australia, the steppes of Russia, as well as on the smaller and greener pastures of England, France, and Germany, that bear these finger marks of Jonas

Webb, as mindless but everlasting memories to his worth. If the owners of these "well-created things" value the joy and profit which they thus derive from his long and laborious years of devotion to their interests, let them see that these finger-prints of his be not obliterated by their neglect, but be perpetuated for ever, both for their own good and for an ever-living memorial to his name.

It is a fact of instructive suggestion, that although Mr. Webb commenced his operations in 1822, he won his first prize for stock ewes at the meeting of the Royal Agricultural Society at Cambridge in 1840. Here he realized one of the serious disadvantages to which stock-breeders in England are exposed, in "showing" sheep, cattle or swine at these annual exhibitions. The great outside world, with tastes that lean more to fat sirloins or shoulders than to the better symmetries of animated nature, almost demands that every one of these unfortunate beasts should be offered up as a bloated, blowing sacrifice to those great twin

idols of fleshly lust, Tallow and Lard. If, therefore, a stock-raiser has not decided to drive his Shorthorn cow or Southdown ewe immediately from the Fair-grounds to the butcher's shambles, he runs an imminent risk of losing entirely the use and value of the animal. So great is this risk, that much of the stock that would be most useful for exhibition is withheld, and can only be seen by visiting private establishments scattered over the kingdom. They are too valuable to run the terrible gauntlet of oil-cake, bean and barley-meal, through which they must flounder on in cruel obesity to the prize. Especially is this the case with breeding animals. Mr. Webb's experience at his first trial of the process, will illustrate its tendencies and results. Of the nine shearling ewes he "fed" for the Cambridge Show, he lost *four*, and only raised two or three lambs from the rest. At the Exhibition of 1841, at Liverpool, he won three out of four of the prizes offered by the Royal Agricultural Society for Southdowns, or any other short-woolled sheep; two out of four offered at

Bristol, in 1842, and three out of four offered at Derby, in 1843. But here again he over-fed two of his best sheep, under the inexorable rule of fat, which exercises such despotic sway over these annual competitions, and was obliged to kill them before the show. It will suffice to show the loss he incurred by this costly homage to Tallow, to give his own words on the subject:—"I had refused 180 guineas for the hire of the two sheep for the season. I also quite destroyed the usefulness of two other aged sheep by over-feeding them last year. Neither of them propagated through the season, and I have had each of them killed in consequence, which has so completely tired me of over-feeding that I never intend exhibiting another aged ram, unless I greatly alter my mind, or can find out some method of feeding them which will not destroy the animals, and which I have hitherto failed to accomplish." The conclusion which he adopted, in view of these liabilities, may be useful to agriculturists in America as well as in England. He says, "What I intend exhibiting in future will

be shearlings only, as I believe they are not so easily injured by extra feeding as aged sheep, partly by being more active, and partly by having more time to put on their extra condition, by which their constitutions are not likely to be so much impaired."

At nearly every subsequent national exhibition, Mr. Webb carried off the best prizes for South-downs. At Dundee, in 1843, the Highland Society paid him the compliment of having the likenesses of his sheep taken for its museum in Edinburgh. He only received two checks in these competitions after 1840, and these he rectified and overcame in an interesting way. The first took place at the great meeting at Exeter, in 1850, and the second at Chelmsford, in 1856. On both of these occasions he was convinced that the judges had not done justice to the qualities of his animals, and he resolved to submit their judgment to a court of errors, or to the decision of a subsequent meeting of the society. So, in 1851, he presented the unsuccessful candidate at Exeter to the meeting

at Windsor, and took the first prize for it. This fully reversed the Exeter verdict. He resorted to the same tribunal to set him right in regard to his apparent defeat at Chelmsford, in 1856. Next year he presented the ram beaten there to the Salisbury meeting, and another jury gave the animal the highest meed of merit.

It was at the zenith of his fame as a sheep-breeder that Mr. Webb "assisted," as the French say, at the Universal Exposition at Paris, in 1855. Here his beautiful animals excited the liveliest admiration. The emperor came himself to examine them, and expressed himself highly pleased at their splendid qualities. It was on this occasion that Mr. Webb presented to the Emperor his prize ram, for which, probably, he had refused the largest sum ever offered for a single animal of the same race, or 500 guineas (2500 dollars). The Emperor accepted the noble present, fully appreciating the spirit in which it was offered, and some time afterwards sent the generous breeder a magnificent candelabra, of solid silver, representing a grand

old English oak, with a group of horses shading themselves under its branches. This splendid token of the Emperor's regard is only one of the numerous trophies and souvenirs that embellish the farmer's home at Babraham, and which his children and remoter posterity will treasure as precious heir-looms.

If Mr. Webb did not originate, he developed a system of usefulness into a permanent and most valuable institution, which, perhaps, will be the most novel to American stock-raisers. Having, by a long course of scientific observations and experiments, *fixed* the qualities he desired to give his Southdowns; having brought them to the highest perfection, he now adopted a system which would most widely and cheaply diffuse the race thus cultivated all over the civilized world. He instituted an annual ram-letting, which took place in the month of July. This occasion constituted an important event to the great agricultural world. A few Americans have been present and witnessed the proceedings of these memorable days, and they

know the interest attaching to them better than can be inferred from any description. M. De La Trehonnais, in the "*Revue Agricole de l'Angleterre*," thus sketches some of the incidents and aspects of the occasion :—

"It is a proceeding regarded in England as a public event, and all the journals give an account of it with exact care, assembling from every county and even from foreign countries. The sale begins about two o'clock. A circle is formed with ropes in a small field near the mansion, where the rams are introduced, and an auctioneer announces the biddings, which are frequently very spirited. The rams to be let are exposed around the field from the first of the morning, and a ticket at the head of each pen indicates the weight of the fleece of the animal it contains. Every one takes his notes, chooses the animal he approves of, and can demand the last bidding when he pleases. The evening after the letting, the numerous company assembles under a rustic shed, ornamented with leaves and agricultural devices. There tables are

laid, around which are placed two or three hundred guests, and then commences one of those antique repasts described by Homer or Rabelais. The tables groan under the enormous pieces of beef, gigantic hams, &c., which have almost disappeared before the commencement of the sale. From eight in the morning until two in the afternoon, tables laid out in the dining-room and hall are furnished, only to be refurnished immediately, the end being equal to the beginning."

This description refers to the thirty-second letting. Mr. Webb's flock then consisted of seven hundred breeding ewes, a proportionate number of lambs, and about four hundred rams of different ages. It was from these rams that the animals were selected which were sent into every country in the civilized world. The average price of their lettings was nearly £24 each, although some of the rams brought the sum of £180, or nearly *nine hundred dollars*! What would some of the old-fashioned farmers of New England, of forty years ago, think of paying nearly a thousand dollars for

the rent of a ram for a single year, or even one-tenth of that sum? But this rentage was not a fancy price. The farmer who paid it got back his money many times over in the course of a few years. From this infusion of the Babraham blood into his flock, he realized an augmented production of mutton and wool annually per acre which he could count definitely by pounds. The verdict of his balance-sheet proved the profit of the investment. It would be impossible to measure the benefit which the whole world reaped from Mr. Webb's labours in this department of usefulness. An eminent authority has stated that "it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a Southdown flock of any reputation, in any country in the world, not closely allied with the Babraham flock." It is a fact that illustrates the skill and care, as well as demonstrates the value of his system of improvement, that, after thirty-seven years as a breeder, the tribes he founded maintained to the last those distinguishing qualities which gave them such pre-eminence over all other sheep bearing the general

name of the Sussex race. So valuable and distinctive were these qualities regarded by the best judges in the country, that the twelfth ram-letting, which took place at the time of the Cambridge Show, brought together 2000 visitors, constituting, perhaps, the most distinguished assembly of agriculturists ever convened. On this occasion the Duke of Richmond, an hereditary and eminent breeder of Southdowns in their native county, bid a hundred guineas for a ram lamb, which Mr. Webb himself bought in.

Having attained to such eminence as a sheep-breeder, Mr. Webb entered upon another sphere of improvement, in which he won almost equal distinction. In 1837, he laid the foundation of the Babraham Herd of Shorthorn cattle, made up of six different tribes, purchased from the most valuable and celebrated branches of the race bearing that name. An incident attaching to one of these purchases may illustrate the nice care and cultivated skill which Mr. Webb exercised in the treatment of choice animals. He bought out of

Lord Spencer's herd the celebrated cow, "Dodona." That eminent breeder, it appears, had given her up as irretrievably sterile, and he parted with her solely on that account. Mr. Webb, however, took her to Babraham, and, as a result of the more intelligent treatment he bestowed upon her, she produced successively four calves, which thus formed one of the most valuable families of the Babraham herd. When I visited the scene of his life and labours, all his sheep and cattle had been sold. But two or three animals bought by an Australian gentleman were still in the keeping of Mr. Webb's son, awaiting arrangements for their transportation. One of these, a beautiful heifer of fourteen months, was purchased at the winding-up sale, for 225 guineas. It was called the "Drawing-room Rose," from this circumstance, as I afterwards learned: When it was first dropped by the dam, Mr. Webb was confined to the house by indisposition. But he had such a desire to see this new accession to his bovine family, that he directed it to be brought into the drawing-room for that

purpose. Hence it received a more elegant and domestic appellation than the variegated nomenclature of high-blooded animals often allows.

When the last volume of the "English Herd-Book" was about to be published, Mr. Webb sent for insertion a list of sixty-one cows, with their products. He generally kept from twenty to thirty bulls in his stalls.

Nor were his labours confined even to the two great spheres of enterprise with which his name has been intimately and honourably associated. If it was the great aim of his intelligent activities to produce stock which should yield the most meat to the acre, he also gave great attention to the augmented production of the land itself. He was the principal originator and promoter of the great Agricultural Hall, in London, for the exhibition of the fat stock for the Smithfield Show. This may be called the Crystal Palace of the animal world. It is the grandest structure ever erected for the exhibition of cattle, sheep, swine, poultry, &c. I will essay no description of it here, but it will carry

through long generations the name and memory of Jonas Webb of Babraham. ' He was chairman of the company that built the superb edifice; also president of the Nitro-phosphate or Blood-manure Company, a fertilizer in which he had the greatest confidence, and which he used in great quantities upon the large farm he cultivated, containing over 2000 acres.

At the age of nearly sixty-six, Mr. Webb found that his health would no longer stand the strain of the toil, care, and anxiety requisite to keep up the Babraham flock to the high standard of perfection which it had attained. So, after nearly forty years of devotion to this great occupation of his life, he concluded to retire from it altogether, dispersing his sheep and cattle as widely as purchasers might be found. This breaking-up took place at Babraham on the 10th of July, 1862. Then and there the long series of annual re-unions terminated for ever. The occasion had a mournful interest to many who had attended those meetings from year to year. It seemed like the voluntary and unex-

pected abdication of an Alexander, still able to add to his conquests and trophies. All present felt this; and several tried to express it at the old table now spread for the last time for such guests. But his inherent and invincible modesty waived aside or intercepted the compliments that came from so many lips. With a kind of ingenious delicacy, which one of the finest of human sentiments could only inspire, he contrived to divert attention or reference to himself and his life's labours. But he could not make the company forget them, even if he gently checked allusion to them.

The company on this interesting occasion was very large, about 1000 persons having sat down to the collation. Not only were the principal nobility and gentry of Great Britain interested in agricultural pursuits present in large number, but the representatives of nearly every other country in Christendom. Several gentlemen from the United States were among the purchasers. The total number of sheep sold was 969, which fetched under the hammer the great aggregate of £10,926,

or more than 54,000 dollars. The most splendid ram in the flock went to the United States, being knocked down to Mr. J. C. Taylor, of Holmdale, New Jersey; who is doing so much to Americanize the Southdowns. Others went to the Canadas, Australia, South America, and to nearly every country in continental Europe.

Thus was formed, and thus was dispersed the famous Babraham flock. And such were the labours of Jonas Webb for the material well-being of mankind. These alone, detached from those qualities and characteristics which make up and reflect a higher nature, entitle his name to a wide and lasting memory among men. And these labours and successes are they that those who have read of them in different countries know him by. These comprise and present the character they honour with respect. What he was in the temper and disposition of his inner life, in daily walk and conversation, in the even and gentle amenities of Christian humility, in sudden trials of his faith and patience; what he was as a husband, father, friend

and neighbour, to the poor, to the afflicted in mind, body or estate,—all this will remain unwritten, but not unremembered by those who breathed and moved within that disk of light which his life shed around him.

Few men have lived in whom so many personal and moral qualities combined to command respect, esteem, and even admiration. In stature, countenance, expression, and deportment, he was a noble specimen of fully developed English manhood. To this first, external aspect, his kindly and generous dispositions, his genial manners, his delicate but dignified modesty, his large intelligence and large-heartedness, gave the additional and crowning characteristic of a Christian gentleman. Many Americans have visited Babraham, and enjoyed the hospitalities which such a host could only give and grace. They will remember the paintings hung around the walls of that drawing-room, in which his commanding form, in the strength and beauty of meridian life, towers up in the rural landscape, surrounded by cattle and sheep.

bearing the impress of his skill and care. A little incident occurred, a few years ago, which may illustrate this personal aspect better than any simile of description. On the occasion of one of the great Agricultural Expositions in Paris, a deputation or a company of gentlemen went over to represent the Agricultural Society of England. Mr. Webb was one of the number; and some French nobleman who had known him personally, as well as by reputation, was very desirous of making him a guest while in Paris. To be sure of this pleasure, he sent a special courier all the way to Folkestone, charged with a letter which he was himself to put into the hands of Mr. Webb, before the steamer left the dock. "But how am I to know the gentleman?" asked the courier; "I never saw him in my life." "*N'importe,*" was the reply. "Put the letter in the hand of the noblest-looking man on board, and you will sure to be right." The courier followed the direction; and, stationing himself near the gangway, he took his master's measure of every passenger as he entered. He could not be mis-

taken. As soon as the plank was withdrawn, he approached Mr. Webb, hat in hand, and, with a deferential word of recognition, done in the best grace of French politeness, handed him the letter. One of the deputation, noticing the incident, and wondering how the man knew whom he was addressing without previous inquiry, questioned him afterwards on the subject, and learned from him the ground on which he proceeded. The photographic likeness presented in connection with this notice was taken shortly before his decease, at the age of nearly sixty-six, and when his health was greatly impaired.

Few men ever carried out so fully the injunction, not to let the left hand know what the right hand did, in the quiet and steady outflow of good will and good works, as Mr. Webb. Even those nearest and dearest to him never knew what that right hand did as a help in time of need, what that large heart felt in time of others' affliction, what those lips said to the sorrowing, in tearful moments of grief, until they had been stilled for ever on earth.

Then it came out, act by act, word by word, thought by thought, from those who held the remembrances in their souls as precious souvenirs of a good man's life. So earnest was his desire to do these things in secret, that his own family heard of them only by accident, and from those whom he so greatly helped with his kindness and generosity. And when known by his wife and children, in this way, they were put under the bann of secrecy. This it is that makes it so difficult to delineate the home and heaven side of his character. Those nearest to him, who breathed in the blessing of its daily odour, so revere his repeated and earnest wish not to have his good works talked of in public, that, even now he is dead and gone, they hold it as a sacred obligation to his memory not to give up these treasured secrets of his life. Thus, in giving a partial *coup d'œil* of that aspect of his character which fronted homeward and heavenward, one can only glean, here and there, glimpses of different traits, in acts, incidents, and anecdotes remembered by neighbours and friends near and

remote. Were it not that his children are withheld, by this delicate veneration, from giving to the public facts known to them alone, the moral beauty and brightness of his life would shine out upon the outside world with warmer rays and larger sweep. I hope that a single passage from a letter written by one of them to a friend, even under the injunction of confidence, may be given here, without rending the veil which they hold so sacred. In referring to this disposition and habit of her venerated father, she says—

“Often have I been so blessed as to be caused to shed tears of joy and pride at hearing proofs of his tenderness, kindness, and generosity related by the recipients of some token of his nobleness, but of which we never should have heard from himself.”

A little incident may illustrate this trait of his disposition. In 1862, a “Loan Court” was held in London, at which there was a most magnificent display of jewels and plate of all kinds, contributed by their owners to be exhibited for the gratification

of the public. A friend, who held him in the highest veneration, returning from this brilliant show, expressed regret that Mr. Webb had not furnished one of the stands, by sending the splendid silver candelabra presented to him by the French Emperor, with the many silver cups and medals he had won. Mr. Webb replied, that the mercies God had blessed him with, and the successes He had awarded to him, might have been sent to teach him humility, and not given to parade before the world.

It is one of the most striking proofs of his great and pure-heartedness, that, notwithstanding nearly forty consecutive years of vigorous and successful competition with the leading agriculturists of Great Britain and other countries, none of the victories he won over them, or the eminence he attained, ever made him an enemy. When we consider the eager ambitions and excited sensibilities that enter into these competitions, this fact in itself shows what manner of man he was in his disposition and deportment. Referring to this aspect of his cha-

racter, the French writer already cited, M. De La Trehonnais, says of him, while still living—

“There exists no person who has gained the esteem and goodwill of his cotemporaries to a higher degree than Mr. Webb. His probity, his scrupulous good faith, his generosity, and the affable equality of his character, have gained for him the respect and affection of every one. Since I have had the honour of knowing him, which is already many years, I have never known of his having a single enemy; and in my constant intercourse with the agricultural classes of England, I have never heard of a single malevolent insinuation respecting him. When we consider how much those who raise themselves in the world above others, are made the butt for the attacks of envy in proportion with their elevation, we may conclude that there are in the character of this wealthy man very solid virtues, well fixed principles, transcendent merit, to have passed through his long career of success and triumphs without having drawn upon himself the ill-will of a single enemy, or the calumnious shaft of envy.”

Nor were these negative virtues, ending where they begun, or enabling him to go through a long life of energetic activities without an enemy. He not only lived at peace with all men, but did his utmost to make them live at peace with each other. Says one who knew him intimately—"I never heard him express a sentiment savouring of enmity to any person, nor could he bear to see it entertained by any one towards another. Even if he heard of an ill-feeling existing between persons, he would, if possible, effect a reconciliation; and his own bright example, and hearty, kind, genial manners always warmed all hearts towards himself. Notwithstanding the numerous calls upon his time, made by public and private business, he did not lose his sweet cheerfulness of temper, and was ever ready in his most busy moments to aid others, if he saw a possibility of so doing." Energy, gentleness, conscientiousness and courtesy were seldom, if ever, blended in such suave accord as in him. These virtues came out, each in its distinctive lustre, under the trials and vexations which try

human nature most severely. All who knew him marvelled that he was able to maintain such sweetness and evenness of temper under provocations and difficulties which would have greatly annoyed most men. What he was in these outer circles of his influence, he was, to all the centralization of his virtues, in the heart of his family. Here, indeed, the best graces of his character had their full play and beauty. He was the centre and soul of one of the happiest of earthly homes, attracting to him the affections of every member of the hearth circle that moved in the sleepless light of his life. Here he did not rule, but led by love. It alone dictated, and it alone obeyed. It inspired its like in domestic discipline. Spontaneous reverence for such a father's wish and will superseded the unpleasant necessity of more active parental constraint. To bring a shade of sadness to that venerated face, or a speechless reproach to that benignant eye, was a greater punishment to a temporarily wayward child than any corporal correction could have inflicted.

No one of the hundreds that were present at the

sale and dispersion of the Babraham flock could have thought that the remaining days of the great and good man were to be so few on earth. He was then about sixty-five years of age, of stately, unbending form, and face radiant and genial with the florid flush of that Indian Summer which so many Englishmen wear late in those autumnal years that bend and pale American forms and faces to "the sere and yellow leaf" of life. But the sequel proved that he did not abdicate his position too early. In a little more than a year from this event, his spirit was raised to higher fellowships and folded with those of the pure and blest of bygone ages. The incidents and coincidents of the last, great moments of his being here, were remarkable and affecting. Neither he nor his wife died at the home they had made so happy with the beauty and savour of their virtues. Under another and distant roof they both laid themselves down to die. The husband's hand was linked in his wife's, up to within a few short steps of the river's brink, when, touched with the cold spray of the dark

waters, it fell from its hold and was superseded by the strong arm of the Angel of the Covenant, sent to bear her first across the flood. In life they were united to a oneness seldom witnessed on earth ; in death they were not separated except by the thinnest partition. Though her spirit was taken up first to the great and holy communion above, the ministering angel of God's love let her body remain with him as a pledge until his own spirit was called to join hers in the joint mansion of their eternal rest. On the very day that her body was carried to its long home, his own unloosed, to its upward flight, the soul that had made it shine for half a century like a temple erected to the Divine Glory. The years allotted to him on earth were even to a day. Just sixty-six were measured off to him, and then "the wheel ceased to turn at the cistern," and he died on his birthday. An affecting coincidence also marked the departure of his beloved wife. She left on the birthday of her eldest son, who had intended to make the anniversary the dating-day of domestic happiness, by choosing it for his marriage.

A few facts will suffice for the history of the closing scene. About the middle of October, 1862, Mrs. Webb, whose health seemed failing, went to visit her brother, Henry Marshall, Esq., residing in Cambridge. Here she suddenly became much worse, and the prospect of her recovery more and more doubtful. Mr. Webb was with her immediately on the first unfavourable turn of her illness, together with other members of the family. When he realized her danger, and the hope of her surviving broke down within him, his physical constitution succumbed under the impending blow, and two days before her death, he was prostrated by a nervous fever, from which he never rallied, but died on the 10th of November. Although the great visitation was too heavy for his flesh and blood to bear, his spirit was strengthened to drink this last cup of earthly trial with beautiful serenity and submission. It was strong enough to make his quivering lips to say, in distinct and audible utterance, and his closing eyes to pledge the truth and depth of the sentiment, "Thy will be done!" One who

stood over him in these last moments says, that, when assured of his own danger, his countenance only seemed to take on a light of greater happiness. He was conscious up to within a few minutes of his death, and, though unable to speak articulately, responded by expressions of his countenance to the words and looks of affection addressed to him by the dear ones surrounding his bed. One of them read to him a favourite hymn, beginning with "Cling to the Comforter!" When she ceased, he signed to her to repeat it; and, while the words were still on her lips, the Comforter came at his call, and bore his waiting spirit away to the heavenly companionship for which it longed. As it left the stilled temple of its earthly habitation, it shed upon the delicately-carved lines of its marbled door and closed windows a sweet gleam of the morning twilight of its own happy immortality.

A long funeral *cortège* attended the remains of the deceased from Cambridge to their last resting-place in the little village churchyard of Babraham. Besides friends from neighbouring villages, the

First Cambridgeshire Mounted Rifle Corps joined the procession, together with a large number of the county police force. His body was laid down to its last, long rest beside that of his wife, who preceded him to the tomb only by a few days. Though Stratford-upon-Avon, and Dryburgh Abbey may attract more American travellers to their shrines, I am sure many of them, with due perception of moral worth, will visit Babraham, and hold it in reverent estimation as the home of one of the world's best worthies, who left on it a biograph which shall have a place among the human-lifescapes which the Saviour of mankind shall hang up in the inner temple of His Father's glory, as the most precious tokens and trophies of the earth, on which He shared the tearful experiences of humanity, and bore back to His throne all the touching memories of its weaknesses, griefs, and sorrows.

A movement is now on foot to erect a suitable monument to his memory. It may indicate the public estimation in which his life and labours are held, that already about £10,000 have been sub-

scribed towards this testimonial to his worth. The monument, doubtless, will be placed in the great Agricultural Hall, which he did so much to found. His name will wear, down to coming generations, the crystal roofage of that magnificent edifice, as a fitting crown of honour.

THE END.

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